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A CONSERVATION PROGRAM FOR WAYLAND

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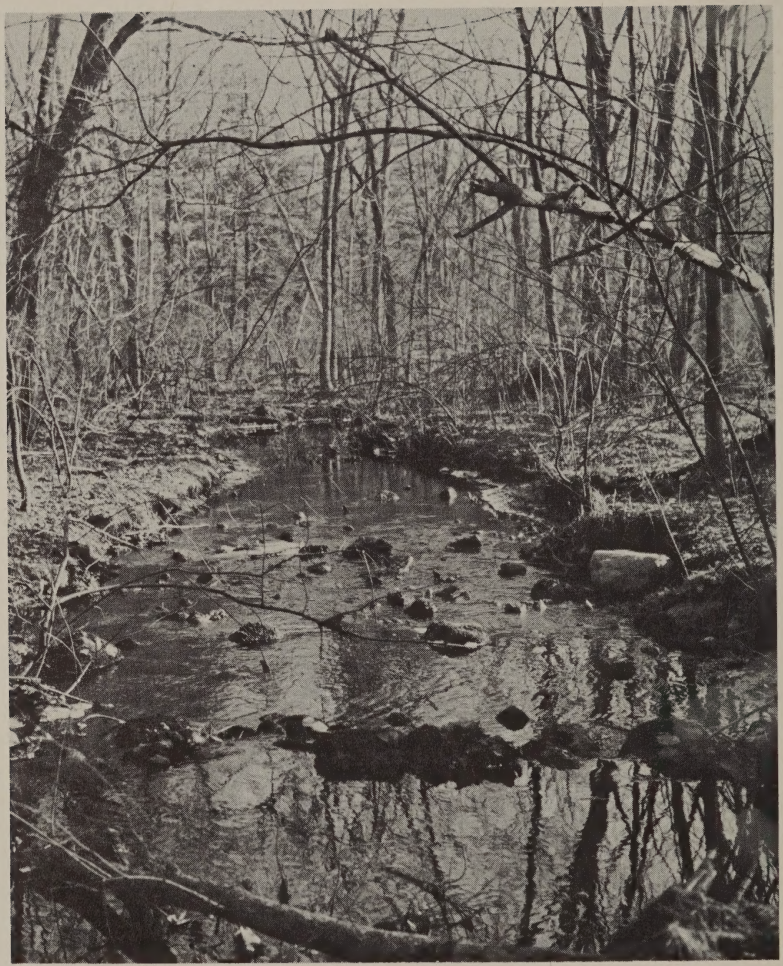

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A CONSERVATION PROGRAM FOR WAYLAND

FUNCTIONS OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Wayland Conservation Commission was established by vote of the Town in 1961, accepting the provisions of the General Laws that permit towns to set up such Commissions.

Its principal function is to plan and arrange for preservation of the Town's natural resources, such as our water supply, protection against flooding, open land for recreational purposes and wildlife refuges, and the preservation of Wayland's rural beauty.

The principal means available to the Commission for accomplishing these broad objectives are twofold:

the acquisition of land—or rights in land in the form of Conservation Easements—which may be needed to safeguard particular resource values;

assistance to other Town boards, committees or officials in planning and integrating Wayland's long-term policies on such matters as water pollution, insect control, shade tree planting, or provision for natural areas such as a Town Forest for passive recreation or school use.

The Conservation Commission, with the approval of the Selectmen, has authority to accept gifts of land and conservation restrictions for the Town, and to purchase land and restrictive rights to the extent to which funds are appropriated by the Town. It has no power to take land by eminent domain.

ADVANTAGES TO THE TOWN OF ACQUISITION OF CONSERVATION LAND

There are many long-term advantages to Wayland that can be cited for the outright acquisition of land to be held perpetually in its open, natural state. Such advantages include the following:

1. *Preservation of the Character of the Community:*

Wayland's most important natural resource is its atmosphere as an attractive country town. We have already taken steps to protect this by zoning, a building code and other controls over development, but the country atmosphere of the Town comes largely from its undeveloped open areas. With continued growth, these open areas now in private ownership will largely disappear unless we take steps to preserve such tracts as it may be possible to acquire for the benefit of the Town as a whole. Preservation of the country character of the Town is essential to the preservation of present property values.

2. *Protection of Water Supply:*

Our water is pumped from wells located in two well-fields, at the rate of over a million gallons per day. A third well-field has only recently been discovered and it will be developed as our need for increased supply dictates. These well-fields must, of course, be rigorously protected. However, it is vital to recognize that these well areas are only where we pump it out—of just

as great importance is the protection of much larger areas which serve as the source of supply—the swamps, ponds, brooks, woodlands and gravel deposits which soak up rainfall, and leach it back into the ground-water supply.

3. *Flood Control:*

The most feasible means of flood control in an area such as ours is to hold water in the natural storage areas of ponds, streams and marshes near where it falls. Preservation of such wet areas will serve the dual purpose of floodwater storage and ground-water recharge for water supply.

4. *Protection of Property Values and Financial Advantage to the Town:*

Many of the areas of the Town that are most suitable for the conservation purposes outlined above are now marginal or submarginal for housing development. With the pressure of speculative builders for low cost building sites, there is already a tendency to fill wet areas for a minimum distance back from the road and build houses on them. Sample studies show that dwellings constructed on such filled-in sites generally do not produce sufficient tax revenue to even carry their share of school operating costs—assuming an average number of children per dwelling in school. Thus, in the long run, it will save the Town money to acquire such tracts. Also, as cited in 1. above, a home in Wayland today is worth more because it is an attractive town—because it has a pleasant view or nearby recreational opportunities.

5. *Recreation:*

Permanent open areas in public ownership provide opportunities for walking, nature study, scouting activities and other forms of outdoor recreation. It is the policy of the Conservation Commission to make lands under its control available for this kind of use by the people of the Town, but not to develop Conservation Commission lands as organized recreation areas.

6. *Wildlife Refuge:*

Birds and other wildlife help to give country living its attraction. Natural areas, especially wet lands, are essential to keep them with us.

PLANNING AND LIAISON IN TOWN GOVERNMENT:

Natural Resources Conservation has become highly complex as our technological capacity has increased. For example—

Increasingly serious sewage disposal problems are a major concern of health authorities. Such problems can lead directly to the need for a central Wayland sewage disposal system unless there is very close coordination among the appropriate agencies of town government to see that adequate precautions and regulations are adopted to forestall this expensive contingency. Deturgent pollution is already visible in at least one major brook in Wayland. Experiences in other towns indicate that we may eventually find it in our drinking water.

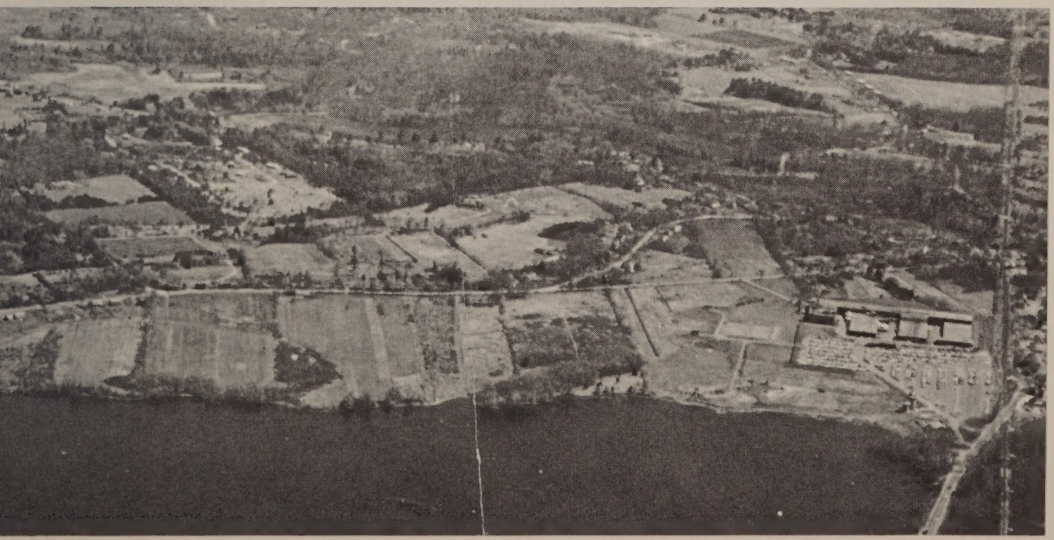
The Highway Department might not realize that a new chemical designed for road-side brush control may be lethal to fish, or perhaps even be capable of contaminating our ground-water supply;

A town official responsible for Dutch Elm Disease control may not recognize that the use of an insecticide may pose grave danger to birds—such as the robin. At the same time, spraying may be a futile waste of Town funds unless diseased trees are promptly destroyed. In addition, it is important to recognize that *diversity* in any tree replacement program is the only guarantee that a similar epidemic will not occur in the future;

RECOMMENDED PROGRAM

The Conservation Commission believes that it is in the best interest of the Town to start a long-range program with the following basic goals:

1. Holding the Sudbury River and its flood plain as a conservation area.
2. Conservation protection of our principal brooks and their headwater and tributary marshes as a corollary to the Sudbury River flood plain program, and as an economically feasible opportunity to retain a pattern of "green belts" throughout the Town.
3. Establishment of several major "open space" reservations in various parts of the Town, including uplands suitable for recreational purposes, to be held as Conservation Commission land or as Town Forest areas.



4. Emphasis, in acquiring land for the above purposes, on acquisition of land which is now marginal or submarginal for housing development, and where future development would be likely to be of a character harmful to the neighborhood and to the Town.

5. The closest possible coordination among all Town officials, Boards, and Committees to safeguard our natural resources and minimize Town expenses.

The Conservation Commission has specific projects under study and negotiation. They will be presented to the Town for approval and appropriation of the necessary funds as rapidly as possible.

LAND ACQUISITION

1. *Gifts to the Town:*

The Conservation Commission welcomes gifts to the Town that will advance the program outlined above. Such gifts are deductible for Federal income tax purposes in the same way as charitable contributions. Such gifts can be made with full assurance that the land will be forever preserved as open areas. There is great flexibility in the matter of gifts. For example, a landowner can retain full ownership for his lifetime

but provide for the land to be owned thereafter by the Town, or the gift of a present Conservation restriction leaves the owner with full control over his land subject to the permanent restrictive protection for the Town against building and filling.

2. *Town Purchase through the Conservation Commission:*

Under the General Laws the Town may appropriate not more than 1/20 of 1% of its total assessed value (about $13,000 for Wayland), or $15,000, whichever is the smaller amount, in any one year for a Conservation Fund to be used for these purposes. State statutes provide matching funds for State-approved projects, (not to exceed 50% of total cost), and there is also some possibility of Federal cost sharing up to 20% of the total purchase price for projects exceeding ten acres in size.

To take advantage of matching State funds, the Town must provide the full purchase price from its Conservation Fund. Subsequent reimbursement by the State goes into the Excess and Deficiency Account rather than into the Conservation Fund. Accordingly, to make possible a reasonable acquisition program and to permit the Town to take advantage of State matching funds, we should immediately start to build up a Conservation Fund by regular annual appropriation. Also, opportunities to purchase sometimes arise suddenly, and may be lost unless the Commission has funds available to act promptly. Any purchase (or gift to the Town) must be approved by the Selectmen.

3. *Town Forest Acquisition:*

Separate state statutes provide for acquisitions for Town Forest purposes. The Conservation Commission expects to recommend acquisitions under these statutes in appropriate instances.

COORDINATION WITH RELATED PROGRAMS

Sudbury Valley Trustees, Inc., through private gifts and purchases, has made a good start on many of the proposals outlined above, but cannot and should not be expected to do the job alone. In view of the urgency resulting from the rapid growth of the Town, it is important that a public program be initiated promptly. The proposed federal Sudbury Valley National Wildlife Refuge, if it materializes, will apply only to parts of the central valley areas of the Sudbury River. The Conservation Commission is coordinating its plans with these other activities, but the Town must do its share if it is to take real advantage of these other programs. The SuAsCo program is now devoted largely to flood control along the Assabet River. Housing development along the Sudbury River was found to be too far advanced to allow similar control work here.

The Sudbury River

URGENCY OF THE SITUATION

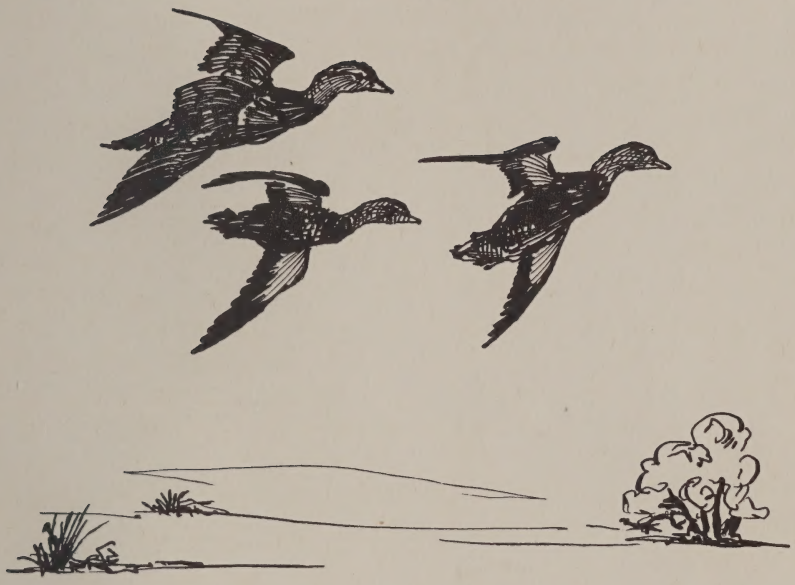
With the rapid growth of the Town, our open areas are fast disappearing. Once they are gone we can never regain them. In the past, Wayland has won wide acclaim for its foresight in flood plan zoning and in acquiring school sites. But recently we have lagged behind other towns in acquiring land for open spaces. Our neighboring towns of Weston, Lincoln, Concord and Sudbury have active open-land acquisition programs. 136 Massachusetts towns have town forests. We have none.

The Planning Board's comprehensive report, "Planning for Wayland, Massachusetts", recently released, strongly recommends that the Town immediately implement an open-land acquisition program. In the 1958 survey of public opinion in Wayland conducted by the League of Women Voters, a large majority favored Town purchase of land for recreation and wildlife.

If the Town wishes to do something about the preservation of open areas, the time to start is now.

William C. Ball
Harrison L. Bennett
Mrs. Samuel A. Cutler
Edward C. Mendler
Fern A. Taylor
Allen H. Morgan, Chairman

January, 1963



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